

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

AT THE

OPENING OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND TENTH
SESSION

OF THE

GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL.

November 25, 1919.

GENTLEMEN,

Thirty years have passed since I was elected a member of this COUNCIL by the graduates of the University of Cambridge. Fifteen years have passed since, by your favour, I was first appointed to be your PRESIDENT. None of those who were my colleagues in November 1889 are now with us, though some happily survive in well-earned retirement. The time cannot be far distant when you will properly desire to entrust the responsibilities of my office to younger hands. But in the meantime I am pleased to think that the efficiency of the COUNCIL, in its work for the public and for the profession, is unimpaired. Its membership may change; but its devotion to the due performance of its functions, defined and limited as they are by the *Medical Acts*, does not diminish. And I am pleased to note also that its influence in the counsels of the nation on medical matters, and its effectiveness in the guidance of professional training and the maintenance of professional standards throughout the Empire, are steadily increasing. It possesses a heritage of accumulated experience and recorded service which will be handed on from generation to generation of its members.

An unusually large number of changes in the composition of the COUNCIL has occurred since we last met. Dr CASH, after eight years of office, during which he gave invaluable

assistance on the PHARMACOPŒIA COMMITTEE, retires in favour of his eminent Aberdeen colleague, Dr MATTHEW HAY, whom we welcome on many grounds, but especially for the help he can give us in questions of public health and preventive medicine. A highly distinguished anatomist, Dr ELLIOT SMITH, unique among us as being registered in the *Colonial List*, has, on his transfer from Manchester to London, yielded place on the COUNCIL to a highly distinguished pathologist, Dr HENRY ROY DEAN. Sir ARTHUR NEWSHOLME, K.C.B., long and honourably associated with the Public Health service in England, has undertaken important duties in America, and has resigned his seat with us. The crown has appointed a worthy and welcome successor in Sir GEORGE NEWMAN, K.C.B. We shall expect much from his energy and initiative power in aid of our efforts for the improvement of medical and dental education. Mr R. J. PYE-SMITH, our zealous and painstaking colleague from Sheffield, has resigned on the ground of advancing age; and his University has appointed its Professor of Physiology, Mr J. BERESFORD LEATHES, F.R.S., in his room. We shall be the richer for his varied experience in the medical schools of England and Canada, and for his distinction as a man of science.

The general election of Direct Representatives, to take office on January 1, 1920, which had been postponed on account of war-conditions from the date of its regular incidence in 1916, was duly carried out in accordance with the Rules of the PRIVY COUNCIL. The result, announced by me as RETURNING OFFICER on November 20, is that all our present members who allowed themselves to be nominated are re-elected. They are to be congratulated on the renewed vote of confidence they have received from the registered practitioners of the United Kingdom who exercised their professional franchise. For our own part, we have reason to be gratified that our sense of their high value as members of the COUNCIL is fully shared by their constituents. Our esteemed fellow-workers for twelve years, Dr LANGLEY BROWNE and Dr LATIMER, did not stand for re-election. They remain with us till the end of the year; but you will allow me to say to them, in your name, that they will

carry with them the cordial and grateful acknowledgments of the COUNCIL for what they have been, and what they have done, while they shared in its important tasks. We shall have the opportunity next Session of offering the right hand of fellowship to their able successors, Dr BOLAM of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and Dr TURNER of London.

The statistics of the general election have been reported to the several BRANCH COUNCILS. They will repay some study by the profession. The dislocations of war-time may account for the large number of voting-papers returned through the Dead-Letter Office. But other causes must be invoked to explain the fact that more than half the practitioners resident in the United Kingdom failed to give any indication that they were personally interested in the election. Out of a total of 34,026 voting-papers issued, only 13,227 or 38.9 per cent. were returned in accordance with the regulations and recorded as valid. In some parts of the country it is plain that, under present conditions, the time allowed for the issue and return of voting-papers is less than sufficient. The fresh experience of the REGISTRARS and of the RETURNING OFFICER confirms the view expressed by the COUNCIL eight years ago (*Minutes* 1911, p. 85) that the time allowed by the *Medical Act*, 1886, should be extended. I propose, with your approval, to ask the LORD PRESIDENT to reintroduce a short measure for this purpose, on the lines of LORD MORLEY's *Bill* of 1912 (*Minutes* 1912, p. 192).

HIS MAJESTY has honoured the COUNCIL by conferring on Sir GILBERT BARLING a Baronetcy and the Commandership of the Order of the British Empire, and the Commandership of the same Order on Sir ARTHUR CHANCE. Our late SOLICITOR, Mr W. H. WINTERBOTHAM, has received a Knighthood. A civic honour also has been bestowed on Dr LATIMER, who has accepted the unanimous invitation of the Corporation of Tunbridge Wells to be its Chief Magistrate during the current municipal year. We express our best wishes to His Worship the Mayor.

Two years ago I ventured to predict that, in the present year 1919, the number of new practitioners registered in the

Medical Register with home qualifications would be far below the average. The registrations up to this date show that the prediction will be fulfilled. But some compensation is afforded by the fact that, during the year, nearly 400 British practitioners, holding qualifications gained in Canada, Australia, and elsewhere, have been admitted to the *Colonial List* of the *Register*.

The numbers of registered medical and dental students for 1919 are, as was also foreseen, very greatly in excess of former records. They are filling the schools to overflowing; some schools indeed have had to postpone all fresh admissions until next April. There is apparently no doubt that in a few years the professional ranks will be more than replenished. In some minds the expected influx is giving cause for anxiety, lest the new practitioners may not all find suitable employment when they reach the *Register*. But it must be remembered that, on the one hand, the wastage of war has been great; and, on the other, that the openings for skilled men and women will be multiplied by the increased activities of the new authorities concerned with the conservation of the health and physical welfare of the people. There will, in fact, be many new demands, and I for one do not doubt that they will ultimately match the new supplies. Under the *Ministries of Health Acts*, various preliminary Orders in Council have been issued and transmitted for consideration to the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. They deal with questions of machinery. The SECRETARY FOR SCOTLAND has requested the SCOTTISH BRANCH COUNCIL to send for his consideration the names of four persons specially fitted for appointment by him to the Scottish Consultative Council on Medical Questions, and his request has been complied with.

As I indicated last May, the two *Nurses Registration Bills* then before Parliament have been displaced by a new *Bill*, introduced in the House of Commons by Dr ADDISON. It avoids certain disputed questions, chiefly by leaving them to be decided, under the directions of the Minister of Health, to a General Nursing Council, which has power to frame rules. These rules have to be approved by the Minister, but it is not provided that, as in the case of the *Midwives Acts*, they are

first to be transmitted to the COUNCIL or its EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE for consideration. You will probably desire me to call attention, through the LORD PRESIDENT, to this omission. Dr ADDISON'S *Bill* does not extend to Scotland or Ireland, but I learn that separate legislation for these parts of the United Kingdom is contemplated. The EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE will bring to your notice this and other points, on which representations might be made.

The framing of a *Bill* based on the recommendations of the DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON DENTAL PRACTICE, which you discussed fully last session, is in hand; but its precise lines are not yet known. The Government has explained, in the House of Commons, that "the issues involved are numerous and complex, and must be considered in their relation to the other health services for the community." The COUNCIL will agree that the *draft Bill* will be all the better if in framing it the Government takes account of all relevant considerations, including those set forth in the COUNCIL'S own *Resolutions* on the subject.

With a view to inducing its Licentiates in Dental Surgery to pursue more advanced study after obtaining their primary qualification, the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh proposes to institute a higher diploma in dentistry. The College has submitted its proposal to the COUNCIL which, under Section II (6) of the *Dentists Act*, 1878, may make order for the registration of the higher diploma as an additional qualification if it appears that it is granted after examination "in respect of a higher degree of knowledge than is required to obtain a certificate of fitness" under the *Act*. The EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE will report to you on the question of recognition.

The Province of Alberta, Canada, has now legislated in favour of medical reciprocity with the United Kingdom. The terms of the new law are such that HIS MAJESTY may be pleased to regard them as justifying the application to the Province of Part II of the *Medical Act*, 1886. In that case the necessary Order in Council may be expected shortly, and the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE has intimated its readiness to give it immediate effect. One Province of the Dominion, namely

British Columbia, will alone remain outside the agreements for reciprocity concluded between the United Kingdom and the several parts of the British Empire beyond the seas. Representatives of the National Board of Medical Examiners of the United States of America recently visited this country with the object of studying and reporting on the methods employed here for the testing of candidates for medical qualifications, and for the control of their registration as practitioners. The REGISTRAR, by my instructions, placed at their disposal the fullest information on these subjects which the Office possessed. The Representatives, by the courtesy of the Licensing Bodies, also attended a number of the qualifying examinations. We are informed that they derived much valuable knowledge from their visit. Their report will be awaited with interest on this side of the Atlantic. The influential movement towards the establishment of a high and uniform standard of professional qualification throughout the American Commonwealth, of which the National Board is the expression, may have issues of importance extending beyond the United States.

Numerous applications from American and Canadian dentists desiring registration in the United Kingdom will be reported to you by Sir CHARLES TOMES' COMMITTEE. They indicate at once the ambition of many ex-service practitioners to acquire a legal status here, and the need for greater uniformity in the conditions for qualification on the American Continent.

The provisional reciprocity established with Belgium for the period of the war may terminate with peace, unless fresh legislation is undertaken by the Belgian Government. I am informed that the legal question is now being studied by that Government. We may express the hope that the experience of our hospitality to Belgian practitioners may lead to the admission of British practitioners to the privilege of practising in Belgium on equitable terms.

Your STANDING COMMITTEES will report to you on the inspection of examinations for Diplomas in Public Health; on the resumption of the cycle of visitations and inspections of final or qualifying examinations interrupted by the war; on

the teaching of the preventive aspects of medicine in connexion with the successive stages of the medical curriculum; and on other matters of ordinary business remitted to them. In order to promote economy in printing, the cost of which has become exceedingly heavy, many of the drafts have been circulated in typed copies, and I do not propose by any remarks of my own to anticipate their issue in printed form when completed.

Fortunately, we have little to print in connexion with our judicial procedure. The PENAL CASES COMMITTEE has had a number of more or less imperfectly formulated complaints before it. But, either because the complainants withdrew their charges or were unable to furnish the *prima facie* evidence required by the Standing Orders; or because the complaints themselves were not of a nature that called for further inquiry at your hands; or because the accused persons were at a distance and could not be summoned in time to attend at this Session, the actual inquiries now to be conducted by you are very few. Some, however, must be regarded as merely postponed to a later date, when the evidence is more complete.

I venture to think that all the business before you can be fully and effectively dealt with by Thursday evening.

